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**GITANJALI AND
FRUIT-GATHERING**



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TORONTO



Painted by Nandalal Bose

GITANJALI AND FRUIT-GATHERING

BY

SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

NANDALAL BOSE, SURENDRANATH KAR
ABANINDRANATH TAGORE, AND
NOBINDRANATH TAGORE

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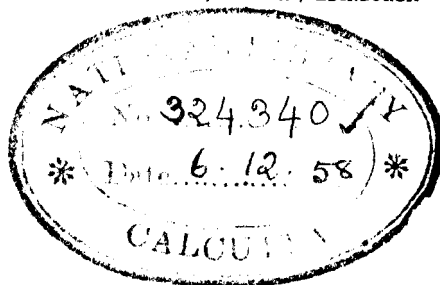
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TO
WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

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IN COLOUR

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IN COLOUR

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INTRODUCTION

A FEW days ago I said to a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine, "I know no German, yet if a translation of a German poet had moved me, I would go to the British Museum and find books in English that would tell me something of his life, and of the history of his thought. But though these prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years, I shall not know anything of his life, and of the movements of thought that have made them possible, if some Indian traveller will not tell me." It seemed to him natural that I should be moved, for he said, "I read

Rabindranath every day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world." I said, "An Englishman living in London in the reign of Richard the Second had he been shown translations from Petrarch or from Dante, would have found no books to answer his questions, but would have questioned some Florentine banker or Lombard merchant as I question you. For all I know, so abundant and simple is this poetry, the new Renaissance has been born in your country and I shall never know of it except by hearsay." He answered, "We have other poets, but none that are his equal; we call this the epoch of Rabindranath. No poet seems to me as famous in Europe as he is among us. He is as great in music as in poetry, and his songs are sung from the west of India into Burmah wherever Bengali is spoken. He was already famous at nineteen when

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he wrote his first novel; and plays, written when he was but little older, are still played in Calcutta. I so much admire the completeness of his life; when he was very young he wrote much of natural objects, he would sit all day in his garden; from his twenty-fifth year or so to his thirty-fifth perhaps, when he had a great sorrow, he wrote the most beautiful love poetry in our language"; and then he said with deep emotion, "words can never express what I owed at seventeen to his love poetry. After that his art grew deeper, it became religious and philosophical; all the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love." I may have changed his well-chosen words in my memory but not his thought. "A little while ago he

was to read divine service in one of our churches—we of the Brahma Samaj use your word ‘church’ in English—it was the largest in Calcutta and not only was it crowded, people even standing in the windows, but the streets were all but impassable because of the people.”

Other Indians came to see me and their reverence for this man sounded strange in our world, where we hide great and little things under the same veil of obvious comedy and half-serious depreciation. When we were making the cathedrals had we a like reverence for our great men? “Every morning at three—I know, for I have seen it”—one said to me, “he sits immovable in contemplation, and for two hours does not awake from his reverie upon the nature of God. His father, the Maha Rishi, would sometimes sit there all through the next day; once, upon a

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river, he fell into contemplation because of the beauty of the landscape, and the rowers waited for eight hours before they could continue their journey." He then told me of Mr. Tagore's family and how for generations great men have come out of its cradles. "To-day," he said, "there are Gogonen-dranath and Abanindranath Tagore, who are artists; and Dwijendranath, Rabindranath's brother, who is a great philosopher. The squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands." I notice in these men's thought a sense of visible beauty and meaning as though they held that doctrine of Nietzsche that we must not believe in the moral or intellectual beauty which does not sooner or later impress itself upon physical things. I said, "In the East you know how to keep a family illustrious. The other day the curator of a

Museum pointed out to me a little dark-skinned man who was arranging their Chinese prints and said, 'That is the hereditary connoisseur of the Mikado, he is the fourteenth of his family to hold the post.' He answered. "When Rabindranath was a boy he had all round him in his home literature and music." I thought of the abundance, of the simplicity of the poems, and said, "In your country is there much propagandist writing, much criticism? We have to do so much, especially in my own country, that our minds gradually cease to be creative, and yet we cannot help it. If our life was not a continual warfare, we would not have taste, we would not know what is good, we would not find hearers and readers. Four-fifths of our energy is spent in the quarrel with bad taste, whether in our own minds or in the minds of others." "I understand," he

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replied, "we too have our propagandist writing. In the villages they recite long mythological poems adapted from the Sanscrit in the Middle Ages, and they often insert passages telling the people that they must do their duties.'

II

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as

much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble. If the civilization of Bengal remains unbroken, if that common mind which—as one divines—runs through all, is not, as with us, broken into a dozen minds that know nothing of each other, something even of what is most subtle in these verses will have come, in a few generations, to the beggar on the roads. When there was but one mind in England Chaucer wrote his *Troilus and Cressida*, and though he had written to be read, or to be read out—for our time was coming on apace—he was sung by minstrels for a while. Rabindranath

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Tagore, like Chaucer's forerunners, writes music for his words, and one understands at every moment that he is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which has never seemed strange, unnatural, or in need of defence. These verses will not lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables, who turn the pages with indolent hands that they may sigh over a life without meaning, which is yet all they can know of life, or be carried about by students at the university to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every

moment the heart of this poet flows outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known that they will understand ; and it has filled itself with the circumstance of their lives. The traveller in the red-brown clothes that he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's home-coming in the empty house, are images of the heart turning to God. Flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch shells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the parching heat, are images of the moods of that heart in union or in separation ; and a man sitting in a boat upon a river playing upon a lute, like one of those figures full of mysterious meaning in a Chinese picture, is God Himself. A whole people, a whole civilization,

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immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's willow wood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream.

Since the Renaissance the writing of European saints—however familiar their metaphor and the general structure of their thought—has ceased to hold our attention. We know that we must at last forsake the world, and we are accustomed in moments of weariness or exaltation to consider a voluntary forsaking; but how can we, who have read so much poetry, seen so many paintings, listened to so much music, where the cry of the flesh and the cry of the soul seem one, forsake it harshly and rudely? What have we in common

with St. Bernard covering his eyes that they may not dwell upon the beauty of the lakes of Switzerland, or with the violent rhetoric of the Book of Revelation? We would, if we might, find, as in this book, words full of courtesy. "I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure. Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you. We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey." And it is our own mood, when it is furthest from À Kempis or John of the Cross, that cries, "And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well." Yet it is not only in our thoughts of the parting that this book

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fathoms all. We had not known that we loved God, hardly it may be that we believed in Him; yet looking backward upon our life we discover, in our exploration of the pathways of woods, in our delight in the lonely places of hills, in that mysterious claim that we have made, unavailingly, on the women that we have loved, the emotion that created this insidious sweetness. "Entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment." This is no longer the sanctity of the cell and of the scourge; being but a lifting up, as it were, into a greater intensity of the mood of the painter, painting the dust and the sunlight, and we go for a like voice to St. Francis and to William Blake who have seemed so alien in our violent history.

III

We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics—all dull things in the doing—while Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity. He often seems to contrast his life with that of those who have lived more after our fashion, and have more seeming weight in the world, and always humbly as though he were only sure his way is best for him: “Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop

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my eyes and answer them not." At another time, remembering how his life had once a different shape, he will say, "Many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence." An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us. At times I wonder if he has it from the literature of Bengal or from religion, and at other times, remembering the birds alighting on his brother's hands, I find pleasure in thinking it hereditary, a mystery that was growing through the centuries like the courtesy

of a Tristan or a Pelanore. Indeed, when he is speaking of children, so much a part of himself this quality seems, one is not certain that he is not also speaking of the saints, "They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the sea-shore of worlds. They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets."

W. B. YEATS.

September 1912.

I

THOU hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

2

WHEN thou commandest me to sing
it seems that my heart would break
with pride ; and I look to thy face, and
tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in
my life melts into one sweet harmony
—and my adoration spreads wings like
a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my
singing. I know that only as a singer
I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far spread-
ing wing of my song thy feet which I
could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I for-
get myself and call thee friend who art
my lord.

3

I KNOW not how thou singest, my master ! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master !

4

LIFE of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths

out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

5

I ASK for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil.

To-day the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs;

and the bees are plying their minstrelsy
at the court of the flowering grove.

Now it is time to sit quiet, face to
face with thee, and to sing dedication
of life in this silent and overflowing
leisure.

6

PLUCK this little flower and take it,
delay not! I fear lest it droop and
drop into the dust.

It may not find a place in thy gar-
land, but honour it with a touch of
pain from thy hand and pluck it. I
fear lest the day end before I am
aware, and the time of offering go by.

Though its colour be not deep and
its smell be faint, use this flower in
thy service and pluck it while there
is time.

7

My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union ; they would come between thee and me ; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

8

THE child who is decked with prince's robes and who has jewelled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play ; his dress hampers him at every step.

In fear that it may be frayed, or



Drawn by Nandalal Bose

My song has put off her adornments

stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move.

Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.

9

O FOOL, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door!

Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all, and never look behind in regret.

Thy desire at once puts out the light from the lamp it touches with its breath. It is unholy—take not thy gifts through its unclean hands. Accept only what is offered by sacred love.

10

HERE is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

11

LEAVE this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a



Painted by Nandalal Bose

Leave this chanting and singing

temple with doors all shut? Open
thine eyes and see thy God is not before
thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling
the hard ground and where the path-
maker is breaking stones. He is with
them in sun and in shower, and his
garment is covered with dust. Put off
thy holy mantle and even like him come
down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliver-
ance to be found? Our master himself
has joyfully taken upon him the bonds
of creation; he is bound with us all for
ever.

Come out of thy meditations and
leave aside thy flowers and incense!
What harm is there if thy clothes
become tattered and stained? Meet
him and stand by him in toil and in
sweat of thy brow.

temple with doors all shut? Open
thine eyes and see thy God is not before
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become tattered and stained? Meet
him and stand by him in toil and in
sweat of thy brow.

12

THE time that my journey takes is long
and the way of it long.

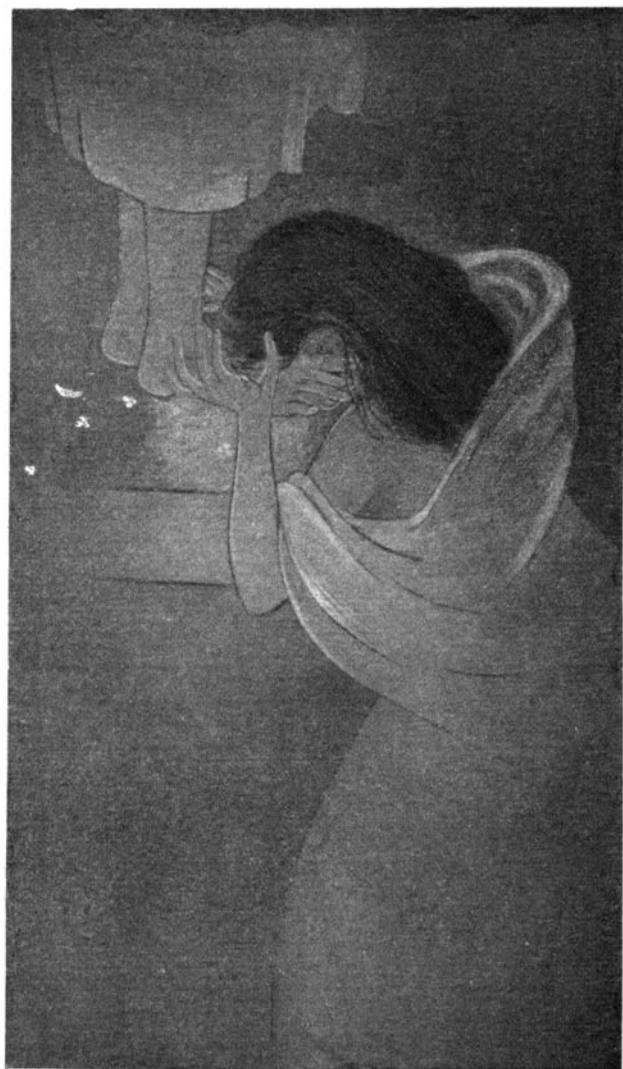
I came out on the chariot of the first
gleam of light, and pursued my voyage
through the wildernesses of worlds leav-
ing my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that
comes nearest to thyself, and that
training is the most intricate which
leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every
alien door to come to his own, and one
has to wander through all the outer
worlds to reach the innermost shrine
at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before
I shut them and said "Here art thou!"

The question and the cry "Oh,
where?" melt into tears of a thousand
streams and deluge the world with the
flood of the assurance "I am!"



Painted by Sarendranath Kar

Here is thy footstool

13

THE song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.

I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.

14

My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals; and this strong mercy has been wrought into my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked—this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.



Drawn by Nandalal Bose

The Song that I came to sing

p. 11.

15

I AM here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat.

In thy world I have no work to do ; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master, to stand before thee to sing.

When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, commanding my presence.

16

I HAVE had my invitation to this world's festival, and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.

It was my part at this feast to play upon my instrument, and I have done all I could.

Now, I ask, has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation ?

17

I AM only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. That is why it is so late and why I have been guilty of such omissions.

They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast ; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

People blame me and call me heedless ; I doubt not they are right in their blame.

The market day is over and work is all done for the busy. Those who came to call me in vain have gone back in anger. I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

18

CLOUDS heap upon clouds and it darkens.
Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait
outside at the door all alone ?

In the busy moments of the noontide
work I am with the crowd, but on this
dark lonely day it is only for thee that
I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face, if
thou leavest me wholly aside, I know
not how I am to pass these long, rainy
hours.

I keep gazing on the far away gloom
of the sky, and my heart wanders wail-
ing with the restless wind.

19

If thou speakest not I will fill my
heart with thy silence and endure it. I
will keep still and wait like the night

with starry vigil and its head bent low
with patience.

The morning will surely come, the
darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour
down in golden streams breaking through
the sky.

Then thy words will take wing in
songs from every one of my birds'
nests, and thy melodies will break forth
in flowers in all my forest groves.

20

ON the day when the lotus bloomed,
alas, my mind was straying, and I knew
it not. My basket was empty and the
flower remained unheeded.

Only now and again a sadness fell
upon me, and I started up from my
dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange
fragrance in the south wind.

That vague sweetness made my heart
ache with longing and it seemed to me

that it was the eager breath of the summer seeking for its completion.

I knew not then that it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart.

21

I MUST launch out my boat. The languid hours pass by on the shore—
Alas for me !

The spring has done its flowering and taken leave. And now with the burden of faded futile flowers I wait and linger.

The waves have become clamorous, and upon the bank in the shady lane the yellow leaves flutter and fall.

What emptiness do you gaze upon !
Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the notes of the far away song floating from the other shore ?

22

IN the deep shadows of the rainy July,
with secret steps, thou walkest, silent
as night, eluding all watchers.

To-day the morning has closed its
eyes, heedless of the insistent calls of
the loud east wind, and a thick veil has
been drawn over the ever-wakeful blue
sky.

The woodlands have hushed their
songs, and doors are all shut at every
house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer
in this deserted street. Oh my only
friend, my best beloved, the gates are
open in my house—do not pass by like
a dream.

23

ART thou abroad on this stormy night
on thy journey of love, my friend? The
sky groans like one in despair.

I have no sleep to-night. Ever and



Painted by Nandalal Bose

Art thou abroad on this stormy night?

again I open my door and look out on the darkness, my friend !

I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies thy path !

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend ?

24

IF the day is done, if birds sing no more, if the wind has flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.

From the traveller, whose sack of provisions is empty before the voyage is ended, whose garment is torn and dust-laden, whose strength is exhausted,

remove shame and poverty, and renew his life like a flower under the cover of thy kindly night.

25

IN the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.

Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation for thy worship.

It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.

26

HE came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me !

He came when the night was still ; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies.

Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep?

27

LIGHT, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!

There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame,—is such thy fate, my heart! Ah, death were better by far for thee!

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful, and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night.

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in me,—I know not its meaning.

A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh where is the light ! Kindle it with the burning fire of desire ! It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

28

OBSTINATE are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them.

Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.

I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.

The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death ; I hate it, yet hug it in love.

My debts are large, my failures great,

my shame secret and heavy ; yet when
I come to ask for my good, I quake in
fear lest my prayer be granted.

29

HE whom I enclose with my name is
weeping in this dungeon. I am ever
busy building this wall all around ; and
as this wall goes up into the sky day
by day I lose sight of my true being in
its dark shadow.

I take pride in this great wall, and I
plaster it with dust and sand lest a least
hole should be left in this name ; and
for all the care I take I lose sight of
my true being.

30

I CAME out alone on my way to my
tryst. But who is this that follows me
in the silent dark ?

I move aside to avoid his presence
but I escape him not.

He makes the dust rise from the
earth with his swagger; he adds his
loud voice to every word that I utter.

He is my own little self, my lord,
he knows no shame; but I am ashamed
to come to thy door in his company.

31

"PRISONER, tell me, who was it that
bound you?"

"It was my master," said the prisoner.
"I thought I could outdo everybody in
the world in wealth and power, and I
amassed in my own treasure-house the
money due to my king. When sleep
overcame me I lay upon the bed that
was for my lord, and on waking up I
found I was a prisoner in my own
treasure-house."



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Prisoners, tell me, who was it that bound you?

"Prisoner, tell me who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?"

"It was I," said the prisoner, "who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip."

32

By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world. But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs, and thou keepst me free.

Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone. But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.

If I call not thee in my prayers, if I
keep not thee in my heart, thy love for
me still waits for my love.

33

WHEN it was day they came into my
house and said, "We shall only take
the smallest room here."

They said, "We shall help you in the
worship of your God and humbly accept
only our own share of his grace"; and
then they took their seat in a corner
and they sat quiet and meek.

But in the darkness of night I find
they break into my sacred shrine, strong
and turbulent, and snatch with unholy
greed the offerings from God's altar.

34

LET only that little be left of me
whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will
whereby I may feel thee on every side,
and come to thee in everything, and
offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little be left of me
whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be
left whereby I am bound with thy will,
and thy purpose is carried out in my
life—and that is the fetter of thy love.

35

WHERE the mind is without fear and
the head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow domestic
walls ;

Where words come out from the
depth of truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its
arms towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has
not lost its way into the dreary desert
sand of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by
thee into ever-widening thought and
action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my
Father, let my country awake.

36

THIS is my prayer to thee, my lord—
strike, strike at the root of penury in
my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear
my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my
love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown
the poor or bend my knees before
insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my
mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender
my strength to thy will with love.

37

I THOUGHT that my voyage had come
to its end at the last limit of my power,
—that the path before me was closed,
that provisions were exhausted and the
time come to take shelter in a silent
obscurity.

But I find that thy will knows no
end in me. And when old words die
out on the tongue, new melodies break
forth from the heart; and where the
old tracks are lost, new country is
revealed with its wonders.

38

THAT I want thee, only thee—let my
heart repeat without end. All desires
that distract me, day and night, are
false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry—I want thee, only thee.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is—I want thee, only thee.

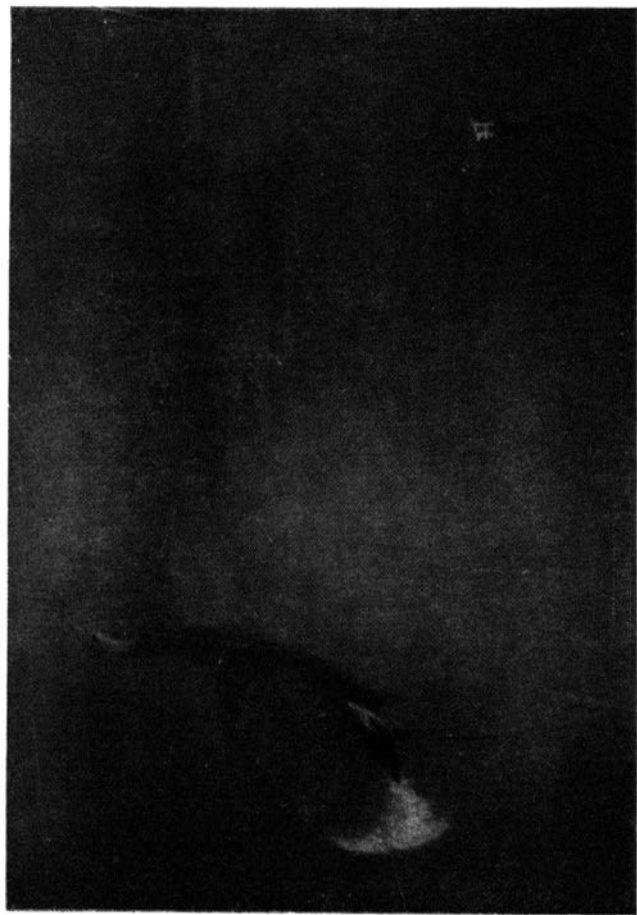
39

WHEN the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door,



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

The rain has held back for days

my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.

40

THE rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked—not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower.

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from

above like the tearful look of the mother
on the day of the father's wrath.

41

WHERE dost thou stand behind them
all, my lover, hiding thyself in the
shadows? They push thee and pass
thee by on the dusty road, taking thee
for naught. I wait here weary hours
spreading my offerings for thee, while
passers by come and take my flowers,
one by one, and my basket is nearly
empty.

The morning time is past, and the
noon. In the shade of evening my
eyes are drowsy with sleep. Men going
home glance at me and smile and fill
me with shame. I sit like a beggar
maid, drawing my skirt over my face,
and when they ask me, what it is I
want, I drop my eyes and answer them
not.

Oh, how, indeed, could I tell them that for thee I wait, and that thou hast promised to come. How could I utter for shame that I keep for my dowry this poverty. Ah, I hug this pride in the secret of my heart.

I sit on the grass and gaze upon the sky and dream of the sudden splendour of thy coming—all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over thy car, and they at the roadside standing agape, when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust, and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl a-tremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze.

But time glides on and still no sound of the wheels of thy chariot. Many a procession passes by with noise and shouts and glamour of glory. Is it only thou who wouldst stand in the shadow silent and behind them all? And only I

who would wait and weep and wear out
my heart in vain longing ?

42

EARLY in the day it was whispered that
we should sail in a boat, only thou and
I, and never a soul in the world would
know of this our pilgrimage to no
country and to no end.

In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently
listening smile my songs would swell
in melodies, free as waves, free from all
bondage of words.

Is the time not come yet ? Are there
works still to do ? Lo, the evening
has come down upon the shore and in
the fading light the seabirds come
flying to their nests.

Who knows when the chains will be
off, and the boat, like the last glimmer
of sunset, vanish into the night ?

43

THE day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee ; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life.

And to-day when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find they have lain scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.

Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star.

44

THIS is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.

From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see.

In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.

45

HAVE you not heard his silent steps?
He comes, comes, ever comes.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Have you not heard his silent steps?

Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes.

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, "He comes, comes, ever comes."

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine.

I KNOW not from what distant time
thou art ever coming nearer to meet

me. Thy sun and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye.

In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy messenger has come within my heart and called me in secret.

I know not why to-day my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.

47

THE night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain. I fear lest in the morning he suddenly come to my door when I have fallen asleep wearied out. Oh friends, leave the way open to him— forbid him not.

If the sound of his steps does not wake me, do not try to rouse me, I

pray. I wish not to be called from my sleep by the clamorous choir of birds, by the riot of wind at the festival of morning light. Let me sleep undisturbed even if my lord comes of a sudden to my door.

Ah, my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish. Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile when he stands before me like a dream emerging from darkness of sleep.

Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms. The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul let it come from his glance. And let my return to myself be immediate return to him.

THE morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs ; and the flowers

were all merry by the roadside ; and the wealth of gold was scattered through the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed.

We sang no glad songs nor played ; we went not to the village for barter ; we spoke not a word nor smiled ; we lingered not on the way. We quickened our pace more and more as the time sped by.

The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade. Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon. The shepherd boy drowsed and dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree, and I laid myself down by the water and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.

My companions laughed at me in scorn ; they held their heads high and hurried on ; they never looked back nor rested ; they vanished in the distant

blue haze. They crossed many meadows and hills, and passed through strange, far-away countries. All honour to you, heroic host of the interminable path! Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise, but found no response in me. I gave myself up for lost in the depth of a glad humiliation — in the shadow of a dim delight.

The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom slowly spread over my heart. I forgot for what I had travelled, and I surrendered my mind without struggle to the maze of shadows and songs.

At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile. How I had feared that the path was long and wearisome, and the struggle to reach thee was hard!

49

You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.

I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear. You came down and stood at my cottage door.

Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours. But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love. One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize you came down and stopped at my cottage door.

50

I HAD gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings !

My hopes rose high and methought
my evil days were at an end, and I
stood waiting for alms to be given
unasked and for wealth scattered on
all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood.
Thy glance fell on me and thou camest
down with a smile. I felt that the luck
of my life had come at last. Then of
a sudden thou didst hold out thy right
hand and say "What hast thou to give
to me?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open
thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was
confused and stood undecided, and then
from my wallet I slowly took out the least
little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at
the day's end I emptied my bag on the
floor to find a least little grain of gold
among the poor heap. I bitterly wept
and wished that I had had the heart to
give thee my all.

THE night darkened. Our day's works had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrived for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said, The king was to come. We laughed and said "No, it cannot be!"

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep. Only some said, "It is the messenger!" We laughed and said "No, it must be the wind!"

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said, it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy murmur, "No, it must be the rumbling of clouds!"

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came "Wake up! delay not!" We pressed our hands on our hearts and shuddered with fear. Some said, "Lo, there is the king's flag!" We stood up on our feet and cried "There is no time for delay!"

The king has come—but where are lights, where are wreaths? Where is the throne to seat him? Oh, shame, Oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations? Some one has said, "Vain is this cry! Greet him with empty hands, lead him into thy rooms all bare!"

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the king of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come

of a sudden our king of the fearful night.

52

I THOUGHT I should ask of thee—but I dared not—the rose wreath thou hadst on thy neck. Thus I waited for the morning, when thou didst depart, to find a few fragments on the bed. And like a beggar I searched in the dawn only for a stray petal or two.

Ah me, what is it I find? What token left of thy love? It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. The young light of morning comes through the window and spreads itself upon thy bed. The morning bird twitters and asks, "Woman, what hast thou got?" No,

it is no flower, nor spices, nor vase of perfumed water—it is thy dreadful sword.

I sit and muse in wonder, what gift is this of thine. I can find no place where to hide it. I am ashamed to wear it, frail as I am, and it hurts me when I press it to my bosom. Yet shall I bear in my heart this honour of the burden of pain, this gift of thine.

From now there shall be no fear left for me in this world, and thou shalt be victorious in all my strife. Thou hast left death for my companion and I shall crown him with my life. Thy sword is with me to cut asunder my bonds, and there shall be no fear left for me in the world.

From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping in corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour. Thou

hast given me thy sword for adornment.
No more doll's decorations for me !

53

BEAUTIFUL is thy wristlet, decked
with stars and cunningly wrought in
myriad - coloured jewels. But more
beautiful to me thy sword with its
curve of lightning like the outspread
wings of the divine bird of Vishnu,
perfectly poised in the angry red light
of the sunset.

It quivers like the one last response
of life in ecstasy of pain at the final
stroke of death ; it shines like the pure
flame of being, burning up earthly sense
with one fierce flash.

Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked
with starry gems ; but thy sword, O
lord of thunder, is wrought with
uttermost beauty, terrible to behold
or to think of.



Painted by Nandalal Bose

I asked nothing from thee

54

I ASKED nothing from thee ; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave I stood silent. I was alone by the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me and shouted, "Come with us, the morning is wearing on to noon." But I languidly lingered awhile lost in the midst of vague musings.

I heard not thy steps as thou camest. Thine eyes were sad when they fell on me ; thy voice was tired as thou spokest low—"Ah, I am a thirsty traveller." I started up from my day-dreams and poured water from my jar on thy joined palms. The leaves rustled overhead ; the cuckoo sang from the unseen dark, and perfume of

babla flowers came from the bend of the road.

I stood speechless with shame when my name thou didst ask. Indeed, what had I done for thee to keep me in remembrance? But the memory that I could give water to thee to allay thy thirst will cling to my heart and enfold it in sweetness. The morning hour is late, the bird sings in weary notes, *neem* leaves rustle overhead and I sit and think and think.

55

LANGUOR is upon your heart and the slumber is still on your eyes.

Has not the word come to you that the flower is reigning in splendour among thorns? Wake, oh awaken! Let not the time pass in vain!

At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin solitude my

friend is sitting all alone. Deceive him not. Wake, oh awaken !

What if the sky pants and trembles with the heat of the midday sun—what if the burning sand spreads its mantle of thirst—

Is there no joy in the deep of your heart? At every footfall of yours, will not the harp of the road break out in sweet music of pain?

THUS it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art the King

of kings hast decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two.

LIGHT, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light !

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life ; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love ; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.



Painted by Nandalal Bose

When I bring to you coloured toys

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

58

LET all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

59

YES, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart—this golden

light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes—this is thy message to my heart. Thy face is bent from above, thy eyes look down on my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet.

60

ON the seashore of endless worlds children meet. The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast

deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships get wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

61

THE sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two timid buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumour that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.

The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it

lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs.

62

WHEN I bring to you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what the pleasure is that streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight that is which the summer breeze brings to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile.

63

THOU hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; I forget that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who



Painted by Surendranath Kar
On the slope of the desolate river

ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.

64

ON the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, "Maiden, where do you go shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all dark and lonesome—lend me your light!" She raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. "I have come to the river," she said, "to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west." I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

In the silence of gathering night I asked her, "Maiden, your lights are all lit—then where do you go with your lamp? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light." She raised her dark eyes on my face and stood for a moment doubtful. "I have come," she said at last, "to dedicate my lamp to the sky." I stood and watched her light uselessly burning in the void.

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, "Maiden, what is your quest holding the lamp near your heart? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light." She stopped for a minute and thought and gazed at my face in the dark. "I have brought my light," she said, "to join the carnival of lamps." I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights.

65

WHAT divine drink wouldst thou have,
my God, from this overflowing cup of
my life ?

My poet, is it thy delight to see thy
creation through my eyes and to stand
at the portals of my ears silently to
listen to thine own eternal harmony ?

Thy world is weaving words in my
mind and thy joy is adding music to
them. Thou givest thyself to me in
love and then feelest thine own entire
sweetness in me.

66

SHE who ever had remained in the
depth of my being, in the twilight of
gleams and of glimpses ; she who never
opened her veils in the morning light,
will be my last gift to thee, my God,
folded in my final song.

Words have wooed yet failed to win her ; persuasion has stretched to her its eager arms in vain.

I have roamed from country to country keeping her in the core of my heart, and around her have risen and fallen the growth and decay of my life.

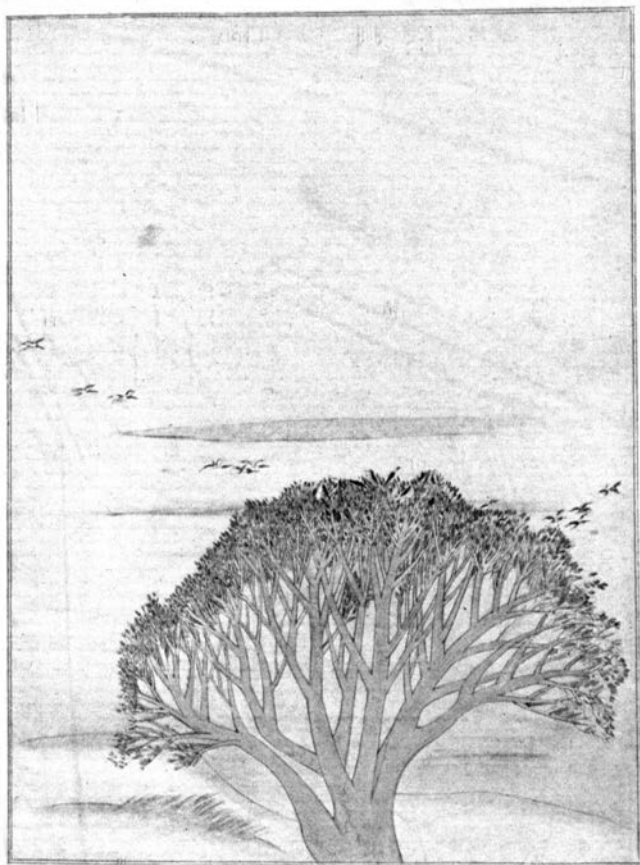
Over my thoughts and actions, my slumbers and dreams, she reigned yet dwelled alone and apart.

Many a man knocked at my door and asked for her and turned away in despair.

There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition.

THOU art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest it



Painted by Nandalal Bose

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well

is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

THY sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine with arms outstretched and stands at my door the livelong day to carry

back to thy feet clouds made of my tears and sighs and songs.

With fond delight thou wrappes about thy starry breast that mantle of misty cloud, turning it into numberless shapes and folds and colouring it with hues everchanging.

It is so light and so fleeting, tender and tearful and dark, that is why thou lovest it, O thou spotless and serene. And that is why it may cover thy awful white light with its pathetic shadows.

THE same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks

into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

70

Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm? to be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy?

All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on.

Keeping steps with that restless, rapid music, seasons come dancing and pass away — colours, tunes, and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abound-

ing joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment.

71

THAT I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides, thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance—such is thy *maya*.

Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separation has taken body in me.

The poignant song is echoed through all the sky in many-coloured tears and smiles, alarms and hopes ; waves rise up and sink again, dreams break and form. In me is thy own defeat of self.

This screen that thou hast raised is painted with innumerable figures with the brush of the night and the day. Behind it thy seat is woven in wondrous mysteries of curves, casting away all barren lines of straightness.

The great pageant of thee and me
has overspread the sky. With the
tune of thee and me all the air is
vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding
and seeking of thee and me.

72

He it is, the innermost one, who
awakens my being with his deep hidden
touches.

He it is who puts his enchantment
upon these eyes and joyfully plays on
the chords of my heart in varied cadence
of pleasure and pain.

He it is who weaves the web of this
maya in evanescent hues of gold and
silver, blue and green, and lets peep out
through the folds his feet, at whose
touch I forget myself.

Days come and ages pass, and it is
ever he who moves my heart in many a

name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow.

73

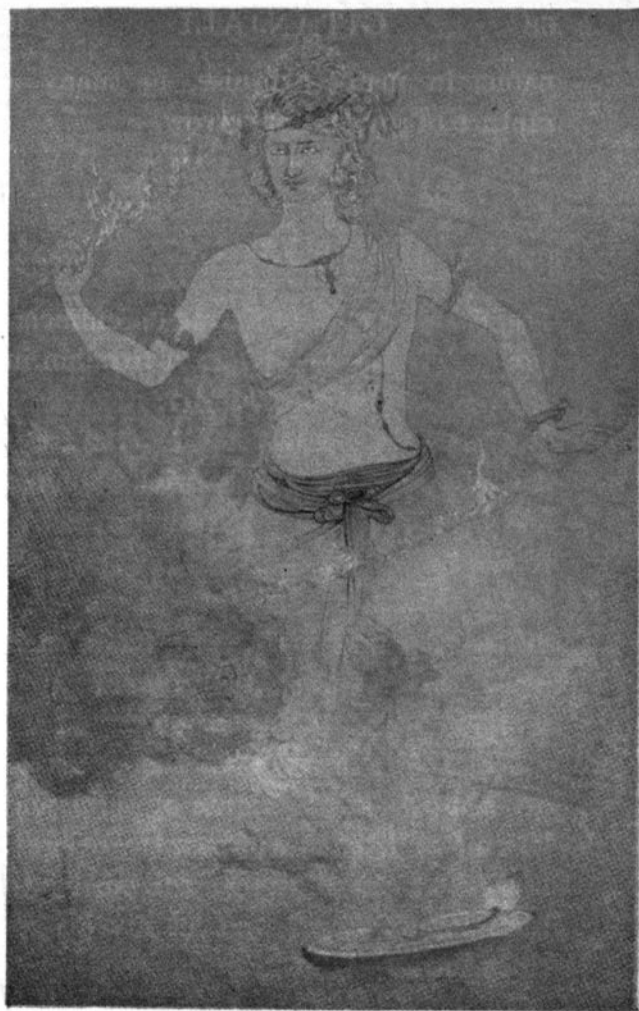
DELIVERANCE is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation

74

THE day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth. It is time that I go to the stream to fill my pitcher.

The evening air is eager with the sad music of the water. Ah, it calls me out into the dusk. In the lonely lane there is no passer by, the wind is up, the ripples are rampant in the river.

I know not if I shall come back home. I know not whom I shall chance to meet. There at the fording in the little boat the unknown man plays upon his lute.

75

THY gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished.

The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and

hamlets ; yet its incessant stream winds
towards the washing of thy feet.

The flower sweetens the air with its
perfume ; yet its last service is to offer
itself to thee.

Thy worship does not impoverish the
world.

From the words of the poet men take
what meanings please them ; yet their
last meaning points to thee.

76

DAY after day, O lord of my life, shall
I stand before thee face to face ? With
folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall
I stand before thee face to face ?

Under thy great sky in solitude and
silence, with humble heart shall I stand
before thee face to face ?

In this laborious world of thine,
tumultuous with toil and with struggle,

among hurrying crowds shall I stand
before thee face to face ?

And when my work shall be done in
this world, O King of kings, alone and
speechless shall I stand before thee
face to face ?

77

I KNOW thee as my God and stand
apart—I do not know thee as my own
and come closer. I know thee as my
father and bow before thy feet—I do
not grasp thy hand as my friend's.

I stand not where thou comest down
and ownest thyself as mine, there to
clasp thee to my heart and take thee as
my comrade.

Thou art the Brother amongst my
brothers, but I heed them not, I divide
not my earnings with them, thus sharing
my all with thee.

In pleasure and in pain I stand not

by the side of men, and thus stand by thee. I shrink to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great waters of life.

78

WHEN the creation was new and all the stars shone in their first splendour, the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang "Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!"

But one cried of a sudden—"It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost."

The golden string of their harp snapped, their song stopped, and they cried in dismay—"Yes, that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!"

From that day the search is unceasing for her, and the cry goes on

from one to the other that in her the world has lost its one joy !

Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves — “Vain is this seeking ! Unbroken perfection is over all !”

79

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When I sit by the roadside, tired

and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

80

I AM like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and years separated from thee.

If this be thy wish and if this be thy



Painted by Nandalal Bose

I am like a remnant of a cloud

play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent.

81

ON many an idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased.

In the morning I woke up and found
my garden full with wonders of flowers.

82

TIME is endless in thy hands, my lord.
There is none to count thy minutes.

Days and nights pass and ages bloom
and fade like flowers. Thou knowest
how to wait.

Thy centuries follow each other
perfecting a small wild flower.

We have no time to lose, and having
no time we must scramble for our
chances. We are too poor to be late.

And thus it is that time goes by
while I give it to every querulous man
who claims it, and thine altar is empty
of all offerings to the last.

At the end of the day I hasten in
fear lest thy gate be shut; but I find
that yet there is time.

83

MOTHER, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow.

The stars have wrought their anklets of light to deck thy feet, but mine will hang upon thy breast.

Wealth and fame come from thee and it is for thee to give or to withhold them. But this my sorrow is absolutely mine own, and when I bring it to thee as my offering thou rewardest me with thy grace.

84

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys in human homes ; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart.

85

WHEN the warriors came out first from their master's hall, where had they hid their power ? Where were their armour and their arms ?

They looked poor and helpless, and the arrows were showered upon them on the day they came out from their master's hall.

When the warriors marched back again to their master's hall where did they hide their power ?

They had dropped the sword and dropped the bow and the arrow ; peace was on their foreheads, and they had left the fruits of their life behind them

on the day they marched back again to
their master's hall.

86

DEATH, thy servant, is at my door.
He has crossed the unknown sea and
brought thy call to my home.

The night is dark and my heart is
fearful—yet I will take up the lamp,
open my gates and bow to him my
welcome. It is thy messenger who
stands at my door.

I will worship him with folded hands,
and with tears. I will worship him
placing at his feet the treasure of my
heart.

He will go back with his errand done,
leaving a dark shadow on my morning ;
and in my desolate home only my
forlorn self will remain as my last
offering to thee.

IN desperate hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room ; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking her I have come to thy door.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish — no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe.

DEITY of the ruined temple! The broken strings of *Vina* sing no more your praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. The air is still and silent about you.

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers—the flowers that for your worship are offered no more.

Your worshipper of old wanders ever longing for favour still refused. In the eventide, when fires and shadows mingle with the gloom of dust, he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart.

Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple. Many a night of worship goes away with lamp unlit.

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to

the holy stream of oblivion when their time is come.

Only the deity of the ruined temple remains unworshipped in deathless neglect.

89

No more noisy, loud words from me—such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time; and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum.

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate

of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

90

ON the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

91

O THOU the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!

Day after day have I kept watch for

thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

92

I KNOW that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got—let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

93

I HAVE got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure.

Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp

that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

94

At this time of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful.

Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart.

I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine is not the red-brown dress of the traveller, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in my mind.

The evening star will come out when my voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies be struck up from the King's gateway.

95

I WAS not aware of the moment when
I first crossed the threshold of this life.

What was the power that made me
open out into this vast mystery like a
bud in the forest at midnight!

When in the morning I looked upon
the light I felt in a moment that I was
no stranger in this world, that the in-
scrutable without name and form had
taken me in its arms in the form of my
own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown
will appear as ever known to me. And
because I love this life, I know I shall
love death as well.

The child cries out when from the
right breast the mother takes it away,
in the very next moment to find in the
left one its consolation.

96

WHEN I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch ; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

97

WHEN my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous.

In the early morning thou wouldst



Drawn by Asit Kumar Haldar

When I go from hence let this be my parting word

call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.

On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangest to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence.

Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.

98

I WILL deck thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered.

I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bonds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out in music like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears.

I surely know the hundred petals of

a lotus will not remain closed for ever
and the secret recess of its honey will
be bared.

From the blue sky an eye shall gaze
upon me and summon me in silence.
Nothing will be left for me, nothing
whatever, and utter death shall I receive
at thy feet.

99

WHEN I give up the helm I know that
the time has come for thee to take it.
What there is to do will be instantly
done. Vain is this struggle.

Then take away your hands and
silently put up with your defeat, my
heart, and think it your good fortune
to sit perfectly still where you are
placed.

These my lamps are blown out at
every little puff of wind, and trying to
light them I forget all else again and
again.

But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

100

I DIVE down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of for ever, and, when it has sobbed out its last

utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

101

EVER in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt ; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey ?



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs

102

I BOASTED among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in all works of mine. They come and ask me, "Who is he?" I know not how to answer them. I say, "Indeed, I cannot tell." They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling.

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart. They come and ask me, "Tell me all your meanings." I know not how to answer them. I say, "Ah, who knows what they mean!" They smile and go away in utter scorn. And you sit there smiling.

103

IN one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

THESE translations are of poems contained in three books—Naivédya, Kheyá, and Gitánjali—to be had at the Indian Publishing House, 22 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta; and of a few poems which have appeared only in periodicals.

FRUIT-GATHERING

I

BID me and I shall gather my fruits
to bring them in full baskets into your
courtyard, though some are lost and
some not ripe.

For the season grows heavy with its
fulness, and there is a plaintive shep-
herd's pipe in the shade.

Bid me and I shall set sail on the
river.

The March wind is fretful, fretting
the languid waves into murmurs.

The garden has yielded its all, and
in the weary hour of evening the call
comes from your house on the shore in
the sunset.

II

My life when young was like a flower—a flower that loosens a petal or two from her abundance and never feels the loss when the spring breeze comes to beg at her door.

Now at the end of youth my life is like a fruit, having nothing to spare, and waiting to offer herself completely with her full burden of sweetness.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Is summer's festival only for fresh blossoms and not
also for withered leaves and faded flowers?

III

Is summer's festival only for fresh blossoms and not also for withered leaves and faded flowers?

Is the song of the sea in tune only with the rising waves?

Does it not also sing with the waves that fall?

Jewels are woven into the carpet where stands my king, but there are patient clods waiting to be touched by his feet.

Few are the wise and the great who sit by my Master, but he has taken the foolish in his arms and made me his servant for ever.

IV

I WOKE and found his letter with the morning.

I do not know what it says, for I cannot read.

I shall leave the wise man alone with his books, I shall not trouble him, for who knows if he can read what the letter says.

Let me hold it to my forehead and press it to my heart.

When the night grows still and stars come out one by one I will spread it on my lap and stay silent.

The rustling leaves will read it aloud to me, the rushing stream will chant it, and the seven wise stars will sing it to me from the sky.

FRUIT-GATHERING 5

I cannot find what I seek, I cannot understand what I would learn ; but this unread letter has lightened my burdens and turned my thoughts into songs.

V

A HANDFUL of dust could hide your
signal when I did not know its
meaning.

Now that I am wiser I read it in all
that hid it before.

It is painted in petals of flowers ;
waves flash it from their foam ; hills
hold it high on their summits.

I had my face turned from you,
therefore I read the letters awry and
knew not their meaning.

VI

WHERE roads are made I lose my way.

In the wide water, in the blue sky
there is no line of a track.

The pathway is hidden by the birds'
wings, by the star-fires, by the flowers
of the wayfaring seasons.

And I ask my heart if its blood
carries the wisdom of the unseen way.

VII

ALAS, I cannot stay in the house, and home has become no home to me, for the eternal Stranger calls, he is going along the road.

The sound of his footfall knocks at my breast ; it pains me !

The wind is up, the sea is moaning.

I leave all my cares and doubts to follow the homeless tide, for the Stranger calls me, he is going along the road.

VIII

BE ready to launch forth, my heart!
and let those linger who must.

For your name has been called in
the morning sky.

Wait for none!

The desire of the bud is for the night
and dew, but the blown flower cries for
the freedom of light.

Burst your sheath, my heart, and
come forth!

IX

WHEN I lingered among my hoarded treasure I felt like a worm that feeds in the dark upon the fruit where it was born.

I leave this prison of decay.

I care not to haunt the mouldy stillness, for I go in search of everlasting youth ; I throw away all that is not one with my life nor as light as my laughter.

I run through time and, O my heart, in your chariot dances the poet who sings while he wanders.

X

You took my hand and drew me to
your side, made me sit on the high seat
before all men, till I became timid,
unable to stir and walk my own way ;
doubting and debating at every step lest
I should tread upon any thorn of their
disfavour.

I am freed at last !

The blow has come, the drum of
insult sounded, my seat is laid low in
the dust.

My paths are open before me.

My wings are full of the desire of
the sky.

I go to join the shooting stars of
midnight, to plunge into the profound
shadow.

I am like the storm-driven cloud of

12 FRUIT-GATHERING

summer that, having cast off its crown of gold, hangs as a sword the thunderbolt upon a chain of lightning.

In desperate joy I run upon the dusty path of the despised ; I draw near to your final welcome.

The child finds its mother when it leaves her womb.

When I am parted from you, thrown out from your household, I am free to see your face.

XI

It decks me only to mock me, this jewelled chain of mine.

It bruises me when on my neck, it strangles me when I struggle to tear it off.

It grips my throat, it chokes my singing.

Could I but offer it to your hand, my Lord, I would be saved.

Take it from me, and in exchange bind me to you with a garland, for I am ashamed to stand before you with this jewelled chain on my neck.

XII

FAR below flowed the Jumna, swift and clear, above frowned the jutting bank.

Hills dark with the woods and scarred with the torrents were gathered around.

Govinda, the great Sikh teacher, sat on the rock reading scriptures, when Raghunath, his disciple, proud of his wealth, came and bowed to him and said, "I have brought my poor present unworthy of your acceptance."

Thus saying he displayed before the teacher a pair of gold bangles wrought with costly stones.

The master took up one of them, twirling it round his finger, and the diamonds darted shafts of light.

FRUIT-GATHERING 15

Suddenly it slipped from his hand and rolled down the bank into the water.

"Alas," screamed Raghunath, and jumped into the stream.

The teacher set his eyes upon his book, and the water held and hid what it stole and went its way.

The daylight faded when Raghunath came back to the teacher tired and dripping.

He panted and said, "I can still get it back if you show me where it fell."

The teacher took up the remaining bangle and throwing it into the water said, "It is there."

XIII

To move is to meet you every moment,
Fellow-traveller !

It is to sing to the falling of your
feet.

He whom your breath touches does
not glide by the shelter of the bank.

He spreads a reckless sail to the
wind and rides the turbulent water.

He who throws his doors open and
steps onward receives your greeting.

He does not stay to count his gain
or to mourn his loss ; his heart beats
the drum for his march, for that is
to march with you every step,

Fellow-traveller !

XIV

My portion of the best in this world
will come from your hands : such was
your promise.

Therefore your light glistens in my
tears.

I fear to be led by others lest I miss
you waiting in some road corner to
be my guide.

I walk my own wilful way till my
very folly tempts you to my door.

For I have your promise that my
portion of the best in this world will
come from your hands.

XV

Your speech is simple, my Master,
but not theirs who talk of you.

I understand the voice of your stars
and the silence of your trees.

I know that my heart would open
like a flower; that my life has filled
itself at a hidden fountain.

Your songs, like birds from the
lonely land of snow, are winging to
build their nests in my heart against
the warmth of its April, and I am
content to wait for the merry season.

XVI

THEY knew the way and went to seek you along the narrow lane, but I wandered abroad into the night for I was ignorant.

I was not schooled enough to be afraid of you in the dark, therefore I came upon your doorstep unaware.

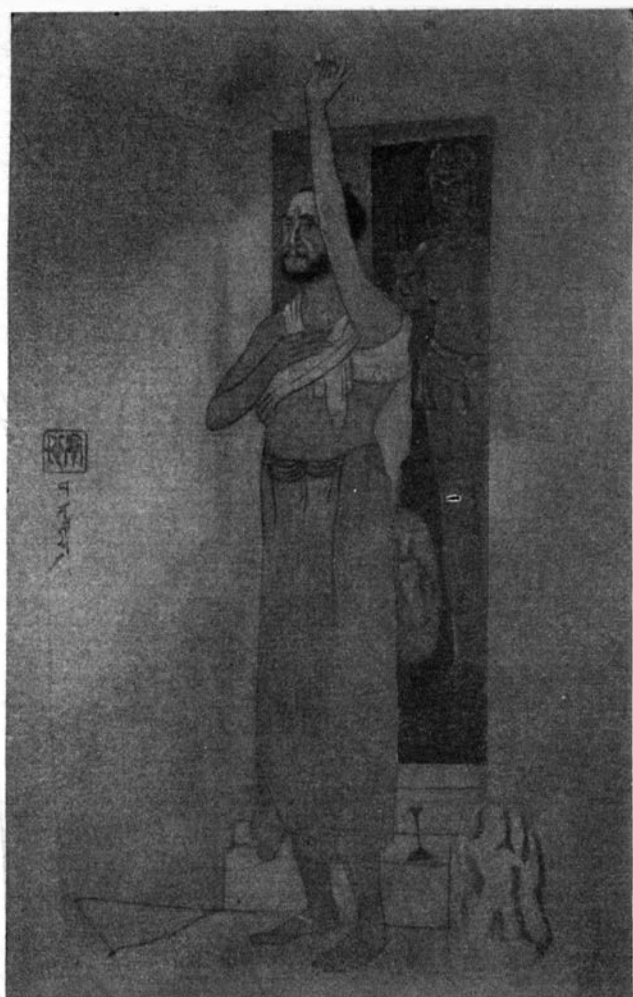
The wise rebuked me and bade me be gone, for I had not come by the lane.

I turned away in doubt, but you held me fast, and their scolding became louder every day.

XVII

I BROUGHT out my earthen lamp from my house and cried, "Come, children, I will light your path!"

The night was still dark when I returned, leaving the road to its silence, crying, "Light me, O Fire! for my earthen lamp lies broken in the dust!"



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

I brought out my earthen lamp

XVIII

No : it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.

Shake the bud, strike it ; it is beyond your power to make it blossom.

Your touch soils it, you tear its petals to pieces and strew them in the dust.

But no colours appear, and no perfume.

Ah ! it is not for you to open the bud into a blossom.

He who can open the bud does it so simply.

He gives it a glance, and the life-sap stirs through its veins.

At his breath the flower spreads its wings and flutters in the wind.

22 FRUIT-GATHERING

Colours flush out like heart-longings,
the perfume betrays a sweet secret.

He who can open the bud does it so
simply.

XIX

SUDĀS, the gardener, plucked from his tank the last lotus left by the ravage of winter and went to sell it to the king at the palace gate.

There he met a traveller who said to him, "Ask your price for the last lotus, —I shall offer it to Lord Buddha."

Sudās said, "If you pay one golden *māshā* it will be yours."

The traveller paid it.

At that moment the king came out and he wished to buy the flower, for he was on his way to see Lord Buddha, and he thought, "It would be a fine thing to lay at his feet the lotus that bloomed in winter."

When the gardener said he had been offered a golden *māshā* the king offered

24 FRUIT-GATHERING

him ten, but the traveller doubled the price.

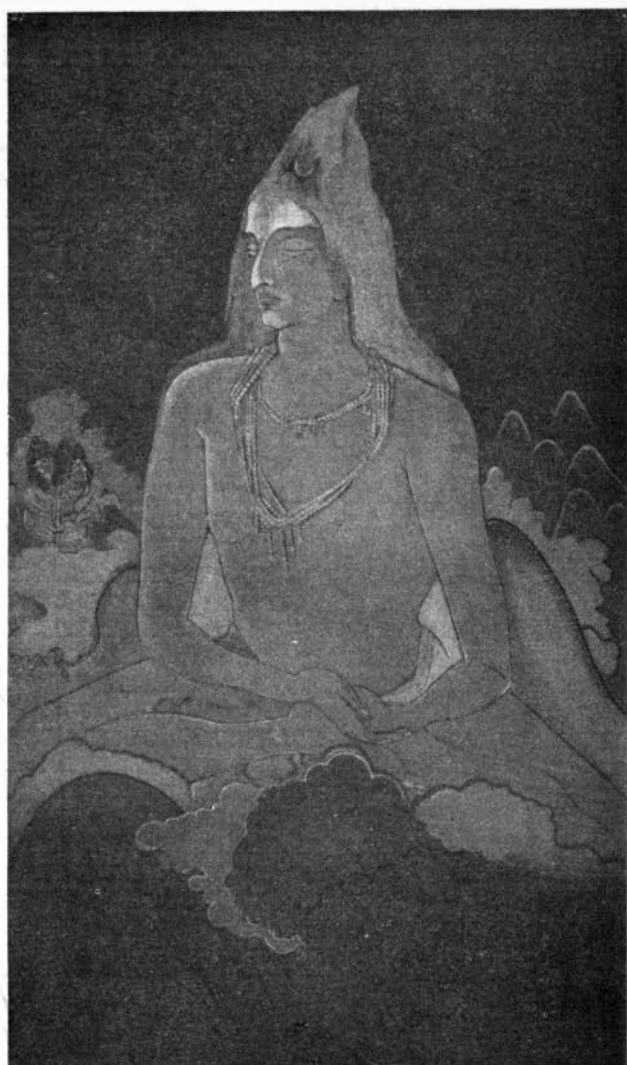
The gardener, being greedy, imagined a greater gain from him for whose sake they were bidding. He bowed and said, "I cannot sell this lotus."

In the hushed shade of the mango grove beyond the city wall Sudās stood before Lord Buddha, on whose lips sat the silence of love and whose eyes beamed peace like the morning star of the dew-washed autumn.

Sudās looked in his face and put the lotus at his feet and bowed his head to the dust.

Buddha smiled and asked, "What is your wish, my son?"

Sudās cried, "The least touch of your feet."



Painted by Nandalal Bose

Make me thy poet, O Night, Veiled Night

XX

MAKE me thy poet, O Night, veiled
Night!

There are some who have sat speech-
less for ages in thy shadow; let me
utter their songs.

Take me up on thy chariot without
wheels, running noiselessly from world
to world, thou queen in the palace of
time, thou darkly beautiful!

Many a questioning mind has
stealthily entered thy courtyard and
roamed through thy lampless house
seeking for answers.

From many a heart, pierced with
the arrow of joy from the hands of the
Unknown, have burst forth glad chants,
shaking the darkness to its foundation.

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Those wakeful souls gaze in the
starlight in wonder at the treasure they
have suddenly found.

Make me their poet, O Night, the
poet of thy fathomless silence.

XXI

I WILL meet one day the Life within me, the joy that hides in my life, though the days perplex my path with their idle dust.

I have known it in glimpses, and its fitful breath has come upon me making my thoughts fragrant for a while.

I will meet one day the Joy without me that dwells behind the screen of light—and will stand in the overflowing solitude where all things are seen as by their creator.

XXII

THIS autumn morning is tired with excess of light, and if your songs grow fitful and languid give me your flute awhile.

I shall but play with it as the whim takes me,—now take it on my lap, now touch it with my lips, now keep it by my side on the grass.

But in the solemn evening stillness I shall gather flowers, to deck it with wreaths, I shall fill it with fragrance ; I shall worship it with the lighted lamp.

Then at night I shall come to you and give you back your flute.

You will play on it the music of midnight when the lonely crescent moon wanders among the stars.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

This autumn morning is tired with excess of light

XXIII

THE poet's mind floats and dances on the waves of life amidst the voices of wind and water.

Now when the sun has set and the darkened sky draws down upon the sea like drooping lashes upon a weary eye it is time to take away his pen, and let his thoughts sink into the bottom of the deep amid the eternal secret of that silence.

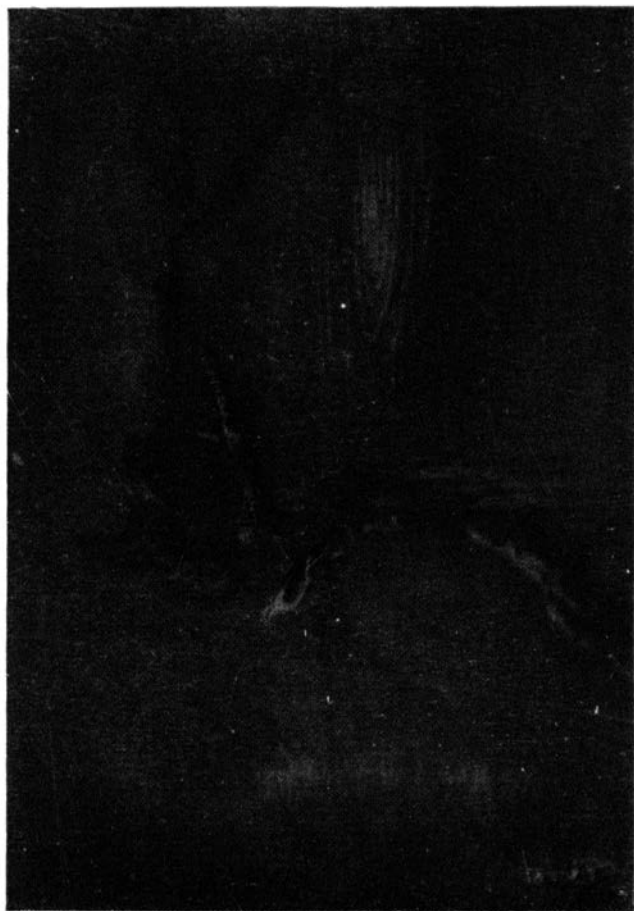
XXIV

THE night is dark and your slumber
is deep in the hush of my being.

Wake, O Pain of Love, for I know
not how to open the door, and I stand
outside.

The hours wait, the stars watch, the
wind is still, the silence is heavy in my
heart.

Wake, Love, wake ! brim my empty
cup, and with a breath of song ruffle the
night.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore
The bird of the morning sings

XXV

THE bird of the morning sings.

Whence has he word of the morning
before the morning breaks, and when
the dragon night still holds the sky in
its cold black coils?

Tell me, bird of the morning, how,
through the twofold night of the sky and
the leaves, he found his way into your
dream, the messenger out of the east?

The world did not believe you when
you cried, "The sun is on his way, the
night is no more."

O sleeper, awake!

Bare your forehead, waiting for the
first blessing of light, and sing with the
bird of the morning in glad faith.

XXVI

THE beggar in me lifted his lean hands to the starless sky and cried into night's ear with his hungry voice.

His prayers were to the blind Darkness who lay like a fallen god in a desolate heaven of lost hopes.

The cry of desire eddied round a chasm of despair, a wailing bird circling its empty nest.

But when morning dropped anchor at the rim of the East, the beggar in me leapt and cried :

"Blessed am I that the deaf night denied me—that its coffer was empty."

He cried, "O Life, O Light, you are precious! and precious is the joy that at last has known you!"

XXVII

SANĀTAN was telling his beads by the Ganges when a Brahmin in rags came to him and said, "Help me, I am poor!"

"My alms-bowl is all that is my own," said Sanātan, "I have given away everything I had."

"But my lord Shiva came to me in my dreams," said the Brahmin, "and counselled me to come to you."

Sanātan suddenly remembered he had picked up a stone without price among the pebbles on the river-bank, and thinking that some one might need it hid it in the sands.

He pointed out the spot to the Brahmin, who wondering dug up the stone.

The Brahmin sat on the earth and

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mused alone till the sun went down behind the trees, and cowherds went home with their cattle.

Then he rose and came slowly to Sanātan and said, "Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that disdains all the wealth of the world."

And he threw the precious stone into the water.

XXVIII

TIME after time I came to your gate with raised hands, asking for more and yet more.

You gave and gave, now in slow measure, now in sudden excess.

I took some, and some things I let drop ; some lay heavy on my hands ; some I made into playthings and broke them when tired ; till the wrecks and the hoard of your gifts grew immense, hiding you, and the ceaseless expectation wore my heart out.

Take, oh take—has now become my cry.

Shatter all from this beggar's bowl : put out this lamp of the importunate watcher : hold my hands, raise me from the still-gathering heap of your gifts into the bare infinity of your uncrowded presence.

XXIX

You have set me among those who are
defeated.

I know it is not for me to win, nor
to leave the game.

I shall plunge into the pool although
but to sink to the bottom.

I shall play the game of my undoing.

I shall stake all I have and when I
lose my last penny I shall stake myself,
and then I think I shall have won
through my utter defeat.



Painted by Nobendranath Tagore

A smile of mirth spread over the sky

XXX

A SMILE of mirth spread over the sky
when you dressed my heart in rags and
sent her forth into the road to beg.

She went from door to door, and
many a time when her bowl was nearly
full she was robbed.

At the end of the weary day she
came to your palace gate holding up
her pitiful bowl, and you came and
took her hand and seated her beside
you on your throne.

XXXI

"Who among you will take up the duty of feeding the hungry?" Lord Buddha asked his followers when famine raged at Shravasti.

Ratnākar, the banker, hung his head and said, "Much more is needed than all my wealth to feed the hungry."

Jaysen, the chief of the King's army, said, "I would gladly give my life's blood, but there is not enough food in my house."

Dharmapāl, who owned broad acres of land, said with a sigh, "The drought demon has sucked my fields dry. I know not how to pay King's dues."

Then rose Supriyā, the mendicant's daughter.

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She bowed to all and meekly said,
“I will feed the hungry.”

“How!” they cried in surprise.
“How can you hope to fulfil that
vow?”

“I am the poorest of you all,” said
Supriyā, “that is my strength. I have
my coffer and my store at each of
your houses.”

XXXII

My king was unknown to me, therefore when he claimed his tribute I was bold to think I would hide myself leaving my debts unpaid.

I fled and fled behind my day's work and my night's dreams.

But his claims followed me at every breath I drew.

Thus I came to know that I am known to him and no place left which is mine.

Now I wish to lay my all before his feet, and gain the right to my place in his kingdom.

XXXIII

WHEN I thought I would mould
you, an image from my life for men
to worship, I brought my dust and
desires and all my coloured delusions
and dreams.

When I asked you to mould with
my life an image from your heart for
you to love, you brought your fire and
force, and truth, loveliness and peace.

XXXIV

"SIRE," announced the servant to the King, "the saint Narottam has never deigned to enter your royal temple.

"He is singing God's praise under the trees by the open road. The temple is empty of worshippers.

"They flock round him like bees round the white lotus, leaving the golden jar of honey unheeded."

The King, vexed at heart, went to the spot where Narottam sat on the grass.

He asked him, "Father, why leave my temple of the golden dome and sit on the dust outside to preach God's love?"

"Because God is not there in your temple," said Narottam.

The King frowned and said, "Do

FRUIT-GATHERING 43

you know, twenty millions of gold went to the making of that marvel of art, and it was consecrated to God with costly rites ?”

“ Yes, I know it,” answered Narottam. “ It was in that year when thousands of your people whose houses had been burned stood vainly asking for help at your door.

“ And God said, ‘ The poor creature who can give no shelter to his brothers would build my house !’

“ And he took his place with the shelterless under the trees by the road.

“ And that golden bubble is empty of all but hot vapour of pride.”

The King cried in anger, “ Leave my land.”

Calmly said the saint, “ Yes, banish me where you have banished my God.”

XXXV

THE trumpet lies in the dust.

The wind is weary, the light is dead.

Ah the evil day !

Come, fighters, carrying your flags,
and singers, with your war-songs !

Come, pilgrims of the march, hurry-
ing on your journey !

The trumpet lies in the dust waiting
for us.

I was on my way to the temple with
my evening offerings, seeking for a place
of rest after the day's dusty toil : hoping
my hurts would be healed and the
stains in my garment washed white,
when I found thy trumpet lying in the
dust.

Was it not the hour for me to light
my evening lamp ?



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore
The trumpet lies in the dust

FRUIT-GATHERING 45

Had not the night sung its lullaby
to the stars ?

O thou blood-red rose, my poppies
of sleep have paled and faded !

I was certain my wanderings were
over and my debts all paid when
suddenly I came upon thy trumpet
lying in the dust.

Strike my drowsy heart with thy
spell of youth !

Let my joy in life blaze up in fire.

Let the shafts of awakening fly
through the heart of night, and a thrill
of dread shake blindness and palsy.

I have come to raise thy trumpet
from the dust.

Sleep is no more for me—my walk
shall be through showers of arrows.

Some shall run out of their houses
and come to my side—some shall weep.

Some in their beds shall toss and
groan in dire dreams.

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For to-night thy trumpet shall be
sounded.

From thee I have asked peace only
to find shame.

Now I stand before thee—help me
to put on my armour !

Let hard blows of trouble strike fire
into my life.

Let my heart beat in pain, the drum
of thy victory.

My hands shall be utterly emptied
to take up thy trumpet.

XXXVI

WHEN, mad in their mirth, they raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful, it made my heart sick.

I cried to thee and said, "Take thy rod of punishment and judge them."

The morning light struck upon those eyes, red with the revel of night; the place of the white lily greeted their burning breath; the stars through the depth of the sacred dark stared at their carousing—at those that raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful!

Thy judgment seat was in the flower garden, in the birds' notes in springtime: in the shady river-banks, where the trees muttered in answer to the muttering of the waves.

O my Lover, they were pitiless in their passion.

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They prowled in the dark to snatch
thy ornaments to deck their own
desires.

When they had struck thee and
thou wert pained, it pierced me to the
quick, and I cried to thee and said,
"Take thy sword, O my Lover, and
judge them !

Ah, but thy justice was vigilant.

A mother's tears were shed on their
insolence ; the imperishable faith of a
lover hid their spears of rebellion in its
own wounds.

Thy judgment was in the mute pain
of sleepless love : in the blush of the
chaste : in the tears of the night of the
desolate : in the pale morning-light of
forgiveness.

O Terrible, they in their reckless
greed climbed thy gate at night, break-
ing into thy storehouse to rob thee.

But the weight of their plunder grew

FRUIT-GATHERING 49

immense, too heavy to carry or to remove.

Thereupon I cried to thee and said, Forgive them, O Terrible !

Thy forgiveness burst in storms, throwing them down, scattering their thefts in the dust.

Thy forgiveness was in the thunder-stone ; in the shower of blood ; in the angry red of the sunset.

XXXVII

UPAGUPTA, the disciple of Buddha, lay asleep on the dust by the city wall of Mathura.

Lamps were all out, doors were all shut, and stars were all hidden by the murky sky of August.

Whose feet were those tinkling with anklets, touching his breast of a sudden ?

He woke up startled, and the light from a woman's lamp struck his forgiving eyes.

It was the dancing girl, starred with jewels, clouded with a pale-blue mantle, drunk with the wine of her youth.

She lowered her lamp and saw the young face, austerely beautiful.

"Forgive me, young ascetic," said the woman ; "graciously come to my

FRUIT-GATHERING 51

house. The dusty earth is not a fit bed for you."

The ascetic answered, "Woman, go on your way; when the time is ripe I will come to you."

Suddenly the black night showed its teeth in a flash of lightning.

The storm growled from the corner of the sky, and the woman trembled in fear.

.

The branches of the wayside trees were aching with blossom.

Gay notes of the flute came floating in the warm spring air from afar.

The citizens had gone to the woods, to the festival of flowers.

From the mid-sky gazed the full moon on the shadows of the silent town.

The young ascetic was walking in

52 FRUIT-GATHERING

the lonely street, while overhead the lovesick *koels* urged from the mango branches their sleepless plaint.

Upagupta passed through the city gates, and stood at the base of the rampart.

What woman lay in the shadow of the wall at his feet, struck with the black pestilence, her body spotted with sores, hurriedly driven away from the town ?

The ascetic sat by her side, taking her head on his knees, and moistened her lips with water and smeared her body with balm.

“ Who are you, merciful one ? ” asked the woman.

“ The time, at last, has come to visit you, and I am here,” replied the young ascetic.

XXXVIII

THIS is no mere dallying of love between us, my lover.

Again and again have swooped down upon me the screaming nights of storm, blowing out my lamp: dark doubts have gathered, blotting out all stars from my sky.

Again and again the banks have burst, letting the flood sweep away my harvest, and wailing and despair have rent my sky from end to end.

This have I learnt that there are blows of pain in your love, never the cold apathy of death.

XXXIX

THE wall breaks asunder, light, like
divine laughter, bursts in.

Victory, O Light !

The heart of the night is pierced !

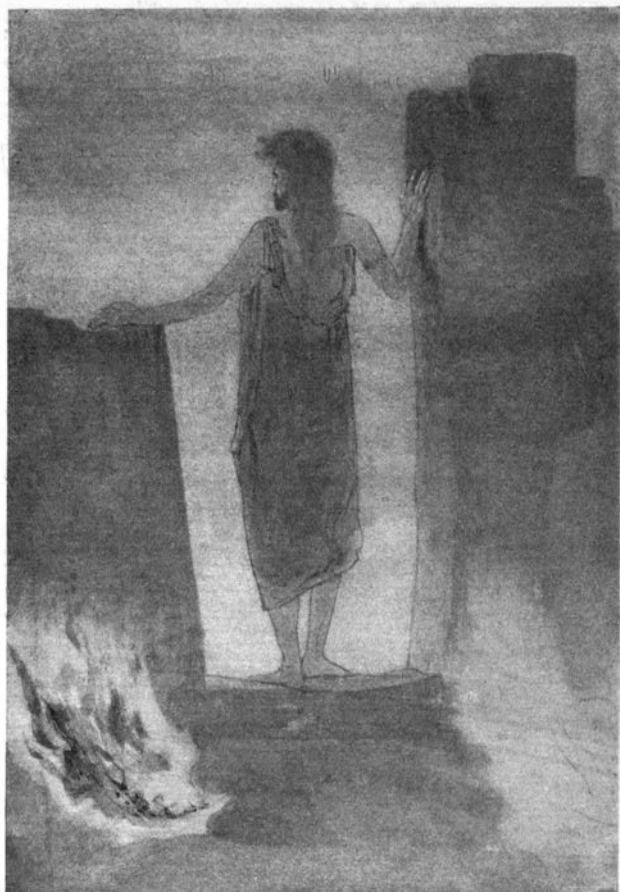
With your flashing sword cut in
twain the tangle of doubt and feeble
desires !

Victory !

Come, Implacable !

Come, you who are terrible in your
whiteness.

O Light, your drum sounds in the
march of fire, and the red torch is
held on high ; death dies in a burst of
splendour !



Painted by Nobendranath Tagore

The wall breaks asunder, light, like divine laughter,
bursts in

XL

O FIRE, my brother, I sing victory to you.

You are the bright red image of fearful freedom.

You swing your arms in the sky, you sweep your impetuous fingers across the harp-string, your dance music is beautiful.

When my days are ended and the gates are opened you will burn to ashes this cordage of hands and feet.

My body will be one with you, my heart will be caught in the whirls of your frenzy, and the burning heat that was my life will flash up and mingle itself in your flame.

XLI

THE Boatman is out crossing the wild sea at night.

The mast is aching because of its full sails filled with the violent wind.

Stung with the night's fang the sky falls upon the sea, poisoned with black fear.

The waves dash their heads against the dark unseen, and the Boatman is out crossing the wild sea.

The Boatman is out, I know not for what tryst, startling the night with the sudden white of his sails.

I know not at what shore, at last, he lands to reach the silent courtyard where the lamp is burning and to find her who sits in the dust and waits.

FRUIT-GATHERING 57

What is the quest that makes his
boat care not for storm nor dark-
ness ?

Is it heavy with gems and pearls ?

Ah, no, the Boatman brings with
him no treasure, but only a white rose
in his hand and a song on his lips.

It is for her who watches alone at
night with her lamp burning.

She dwells in the wayside hut.

Her loose hair flies in the wind and
hides her eyes.

The storm shrieks through her
broken doors, the light flickers in her
earthen lamp flinging shadows on the
walls.

Through the howl of the winds she
hears him call her name, she whose
name is unknown.

It is long since the Boatman sailed.

It will be long before the day breaks
and he knocks at the door.

The drums will not be beaten and
none will know.

Only light shall fill the house, blessed
shall be the dust, and the heart glad.

All doubts shall vanish in silence
when the Boatman comes to the shore.



Painted by Nandalal Bose

I cling to this living raft, my body

XLII

I CLING to this living raft, my body,
in the narrow stream of my earthly
years. I leave it when the crossing
is over.

And then ?

I do not know if the light there
and the darkness are the same.

The Unknown is the perpetual
freedom :

He is pitiless in his love.

He crushes the shell for the pearl,
dumb in the prison of the dark.

You muse and weep for the days
that are done, poor heart !

Be glad that days are to come !

The hour strikes, O pilgrim !

It is time for you to take the
parting of the ways !

His face will be unveiled once again
and you shall meet.

XLIII

OVER the relic of Lord Buddha King Bimbisār built a shrine, a salutation in white marble.

There in the evening would come all the brides and daughters of the King's house to offer flowers and light lamps.

When the son became king in his time he washed his father's creed away with blood, and lit sacrificial fires with its sacred books.

The autumn day was dying.

The evening hour of worship was near.

Shrimati, the queen's maid, devoted to Lord Buddha, having bathed in holy water, and decked the golden tray with lamps and fresh white blossoms, silently

FRUIT-GATHERING 61

raised her dark eyes to the queen's face.

The queen shuddered in fear and said, "Do you not know, foolish girl, that death is the penalty for whoever brings worship to Buddha's shrine?"

"Such is the king's will."

Shrimati bowed to the queen, and turning away from her door came and stood before Amitā, the newly wed bride of the king's son.

A mirror of burnished gold on her lap, the newly wed bride was braiding her dark long tresses and painting the red spot of good luck at the parting of her hair.

Her hands trembled when she saw the young maid, and she cried, "What fearful peril would you bring me! Leave me this instant."

Princess Shuklā sat at the window

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reading her book of romance by the light of the setting sun.

She started when she saw at her door the maid with the sacred offerings.

Her book fell down from her lap, and she whispered in Shrimati's ears, "Rush not to death, daring woman!"

Shrimati walked from door to door.

She raised her head and cried, "O women of the king's house, hasten!"

"The time for our Lord's worship is come!"

Some shut their doors in her face and some reviled her.

The last gleam of daylight faded from the bronze dome of the palace tower.

Deep shadows settled in street corners: the bustle of the city was hushed: the gong at the temple of Shiva announced the time of the evening prayer.

FRUIT-GATHERING 63

In the dark of the autumn evening, deep as a limpid lake, stars throbbed with light, when the guards of the palace garden were startled to see through the trees a row of lamps burning at the shrine of Buddha.

They ran with their swords unsheathed, crying, "Who are you, foolish one, reckless of death?"

"I am Shrimati," replied a sweet voice, "the servant of Lord Buddha."

The next moment her heart's blood coloured the cold marble with its red.

And in the still hour of stars died the light of the last lamp of worship at the foot of the shrine.

XLIV

THE day that stands between you and
me makes her last bow of farewell.

The night draws her veil over her
face, and hides the one lamp burning in
my chamber.

Your dark servant comes noiselessly
and spreads the bridal carpet for you
to take your seat there alone with me
in the wordless silence till night is
done.

XLV

MY night has passed on the bed of sorrow, and my eyes are tired. My heavy heart is not yet ready to meet morning with its crowded joys.

Draw a veil over this naked light, beckon aside from me this glaring flash and dance of life.

Let thy mantle of tender darkness cover me in its folds, and cover my pain awhile from the pressure of the world.

XLVI

THE time is past when I could repay
her for all that I received.

Her night has found its morning and
thou hast taken her to thy arms : and
to thee I bring my gratitude and my
gifts that were for her.

For all hurts and offences to her I
come to thee for forgiveness.

I offer to thy service those flowers
of my love that remained in bud when
she waited for them to open.

XLVII

I FOUND a few old letters of mine carefully hidden in her box—a few small toys for her memory to play with.

With a timorous heart she tried to steal these trifles from time's turbulent stream, and said, "These are mine only!"

Ah, there is no one now to claim them, who can pay their price with loving care, yet here they are still.

Surely there is love in this world to save her from utter loss, even like this love of hers that saved these letters with such fond care.

XLVIII

BRING beauty and order into my
forlorn life, woman, as you brought
them into my house when you lived.

Sweep away the dusty fragments of
the hours, fill the empty jars, and mend
all that has been neglected.

Then open the inner door of the
shrine, light the candle, and let us meet
there in silence before our God.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

The pain was great when the strings were being
tuned, my Master!

XLIX

THE pain was great when the strings
were being tuned, my Master !

Begin your music, and let me forget
the pain ; let me feel in beauty what
you had in your mind through those
pitiless days.

The waning night lingers at my
doors, let her take her leave in songs.

Pour your heart into my life strings,
my Master, in tunes that descend from
your stars.

L

IN the lightning flash of a moment
I have seen the immensity of your
creation in my life—creation through
many a death from world to world.

I weep at my unworthiness when I
see my life in the hands of the unmean-
ing hours,—but when I see it in your
hands I know it is too precious to be
squandered among shadows.

LI

I KNOW that at the dim end of some day the sun will bid me its last farewell.

Shepherds will play their pipes beneath the banyan trees, and cattle graze on the slope by the river, while my days will pass into the dark.

This is my prayer, that I may know before I leave why the earth called me to her arms.

Why her night's silence spoke to me of stars, and her daylight kissed my thoughts into flower.

Before I go may I linger over my last refrain, completing its music, may the lamp be lit to see your face and the wreath woven to crown you.

LII

WHAT music is that in whose measure
the world is rocked ?

We laugh when it beats upon the
crest of life, we shrink in terror when
it returns into the dark.

But the play is the same that comes
and goes with the rhythm of the end-
less music.

You hide your treasure in the palm
of your hand, and we cry that we are
robbed.

But open and shut your palm as you
will, the gain and the loss are the same.

At the game you play with your
own self you lose and win at once.

LIII

I HAVE kissed this world with my eyes and my limbs; I have wrapt it within my heart in numberless folds; I have flooded its days and nights with thoughts till the world and my life have grown one,—and I love my life because I love the light of the sky so enwoven with me.

If to leave this world be as real as to love it—then there must be a meaning in the meeting and the parting of life.

If that love were deceived in death, then the canker of this deceit would eat into all things, and the stars would shrivel and grow black.

LIV

THE Cloud said to me, "I vanish";
the Night said, "I plunge into the
fiery dawn."

The Pain said, "I remain in deep
silence as his footprint."

"I die into the fulness," said my life
to me.

The Earth said, "My lights kiss your
thoughts every moment."

"The days pass," Love said, "but I
wait for you."

Death said, "I ply the boat of your
life across the sea."

LV

TULSIDAS, the poet, was wandering, deep in thought, by the Ganges, in that lonely spot where they burn their dead.

He found a woman sitting at the feet of the corpse of her dead husband, gaily dressed as for a wedding.

She rose as she saw him, bowed to him, and said, "Permit me, Master, with your blessing, to follow my husband to heaven."

"Why such hurry, my daughter?" asked Tulsidas. "Is not this earth also His who made heaven?"

"For heaven I do not long," said the woman. "I want my husband."

Tulsidas smiled and said to her, "Go back to your home, my child. Before the month is over you will find your husband."

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The woman went back with glad hope. Tulsidas came to her every day and gave her high thoughts to think, till her heart was filled to the brim with divine love.

When the month was scarcely over, her neighbours came to her, asking, "Woman, have you found your husband?"

The widow smiled and said, "I have."

Eagerly they asked, "Where is he?"

"In my heart is my lord, one with me," said the woman.

LVI

You came for a moment to my side
and touched me with the great mystery
of the woman that there is in the heart
of creation.

She who is ever returning to God
his own outflowing of sweetness ; she is
the ever fresh beauty and youth in
nature ; she dances in the bubbling
streams and sings in the morning light ;
she with heaving waves suckles the
thirsty earth ; in her the Eternal One
breaks in two in a joy that no longer
may contain itself, and overflows in the
pain of love.

LVII

WHO is she who dwells in my heart,
the woman forlorn for ever ?

I wooed her and I failed to win her.

I decked her with wreaths and sang
in her praise.

A smile shone in her face for a
moment, then it faded.

"I have no joy in thee," she cried,
the woman in sorrow.

I bought her jewelled anklets and
fanned her with a fan gem-studded ; I
made her a bed on a bedstead of gold.

There flickered a gleam of gladness
in her eyes, then it died.

"I have no joy in these," she cried,
the woman in sorrow.

I seated her upon a car of triumph
and drove her from end to end of the
earth.

FRUIT-GATHERING 79

Conquered hearts bowed down at her feet, and shouts of applause rang in the sky.

Pride shone in her eyes for a moment, then it was dimmed in tears.

"I have no joy in conquest," she cried, the woman in sorrow.

I asked her, "Tell me whom do you seek?"

She only said, "I wait for him of the unknown name."

Days pass by and she cries, "When will my beloved come whom I know not, and be known to me for ever?"

LVIII

Yours is the light that breaks forth
from the dark, and the good that sprouts
from the cleft heart of strife.

Yours is the house that opens upon
the world, and the love that calls to
the battlefield.

Yours is the gift that still is a gain
when everything is a loss, and the life
that flows through the caverns of
death.

Yours is the heaven that lies in the
common dust, and you are there for me,
you are there for all.

LIX

WHEN the weariness of the road is upon me, and the thirst of the sultry day; when the ghostly hours of the dusk throw their shadows across my life, then I cry not for your voice only, my friend, but for your touch.

There is an anguish in my heart for the burden of its riches not given to you.

Put out your hand through the night, let me hold it and fill it and keep it; let me feel its touch along the lengthening stretch of my loneliness.

LX

THE odour cries in the bud, "Ah me, the day departs, the happy day of spring, and I am a prisoner in petals!"

Do not lose heart, timid thing!

Your bonds will burst, the bud will open into flower, and when you die in the fulness of life, even then the spring will live on.

The odour pants and flutters within the bud, crying, "Ah me, the hours pass by, yet I do not know where I go, or what it is I seek!"

Do not lose heart, timid thing!

The spring breeze has overheard your desire, the day will not end before you have fulfilled your being.

Dark is the future to her, and the

FRUIT-GATHERING 83

odour cries in despair, "Ah me, through whose fault is my life so unmeaning ?

"Who can tell me, why I am at all ?"

Do not lose heart, timid thing !

The perfect dawn is near when you will mingle your life with all life and know at last your purpose.

LXI

SHE is still a child, my lord.

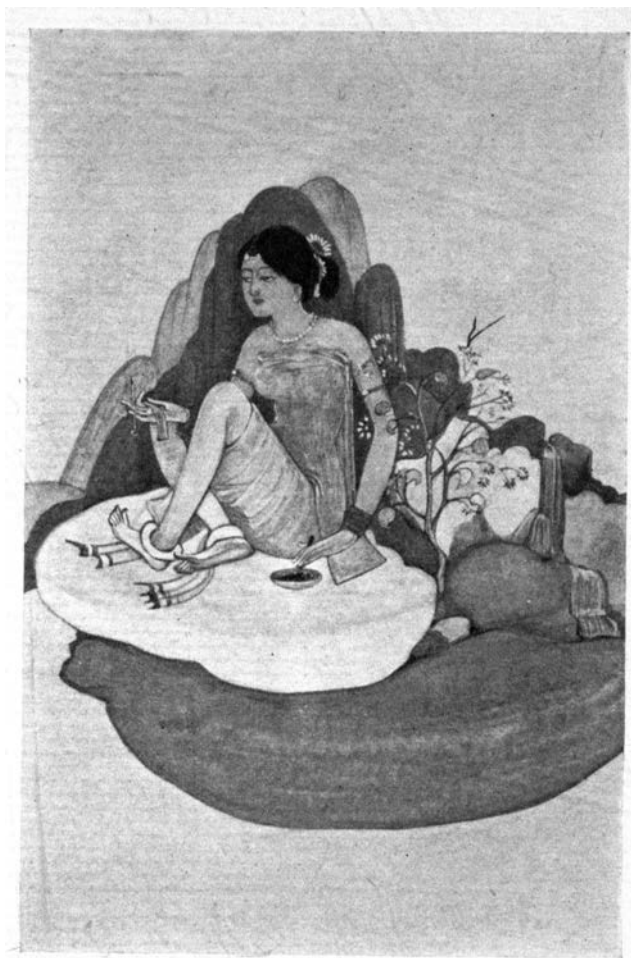
She runs about your palace and plays, and tries to make of you a play-thing as well.

She heeds not when her hair tumbles down and her careless garment drags in the dust.

She falls asleep when you speak to her and answers not—and the flower you give her in the morning slips to the dust from her hands.

When the storm bursts and darkness is over the sky she is sleepless; her dolls lie scattered on the earth and she clings to you in terror.

She is afraid that she may fail in service to you.



Painted by Nandalal Bose

She is still a child

FRUIT-GATHERING 85

But with a smile you watch her at
her game.

You know her.

The child sitting in the dust is your
destined bride ; her play will be stilled
and deepened into love.

LXII

“WHAT is there but the sky, O Sun, that can hold thine image?”

“I dream of thee, but to serve thee I can never hope,” the dewdrop wept and said, “I am too small to take thee unto me, great lord, and my life is all tears.”

“I illumine the limitless sky, yet I can yield myself up to a tiny drop of dew,” thus the Sun said; “I shall become but a sparkle of light and fill you, and your little life will be a laughing orb.”

LXIII

Not for me is the love that knows no restraint, but like the foaming wine that having burst its vessel in a moment would run to waste.

Send me the love which is cool and pure like your rain that blesses the thirsty earth and fills the homely earthen jars.

Send me the love that would soak down into the centre of being, and from there would spread like the unseen sap through the branching tree of life, giving birth to fruits and flowers.

Send me the love that keeps the heart still with the fulness of peace.

LXIV

THE sun had set on the western margin of the river among the tangle of the forest.

The hermit boys had brought the cattle home, and sat round the fire to listen to the master, Gautama, when a strange boy came, and greeted him with fruits and flowers, and, bowing low at his feet, spoke in a bird-like voice—
“Lord, I have come to thee to be taken into the path of the supreme Truth.

“My name is Satyakāma.”

“Blessings be on thy head,” said the master.

“Of what clan art thou, my child? It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom.”

“Master,” answered the boy, “I

know not of what clan I am. I shall go and ask my mother."

Thus saying, Satyakāma took leave, and wading across the shallow stream, came back to his mother's hut, which stood at the end of the sandy waste at the edge of the sleeping village.

The lamp burnt dimly in the room, and the mother stood at the door in the dark waiting for her son's return.

She clasped him to her bosom, kissed him on his hair, and asked him of his errand to the master.

"What is the name of my father, dear mother?" asked the boy.

"It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom, said Lord Gautama to me."

The woman lowered her eyes, and spoke in a whisper.

"In my youth I was poor and had

90 FRUIT-GATHERING

many masters. Thou didst come to thy mother Jabālā's arms, my darling, who had no husband."

The early rays of the sun glistened on the tree-tops of the forest hermitage.

The students, with their tangled hair still wet with their morning bath, sat under the ancient tree, before the master.

There came Satyakāma.

He bowed low at the feet of the sage, and stood silent.

"Tell me," the great teacher asked him, "of what clan art thou?"

"My lord," he answered, "I know it not. My mother said when I asked her, 'I had served many masters in my youth, and thou hadst come to thy mother Jabālā's arms, who had no husband.'"

There rose a murmur like the angry hum of bees disturbed in their hive;

FRUIT-GATHERING 91

and the students muttered at the shameless insolence of that outcast.

Master Gautama rose from his seat, stretched out his arms, took the boy to his bosom, and said, "Best of all Brahmins art thou, my child. Thou hast the noblest heritage of truth."

LXV

MAY be there is one house in this city where the gate opens for ever this morning at the touch of the sunrise, where the errand of the light is fulfilled.

The flowers have opened in hedges and gardens, and may be there is one heart that has found in them this morning the gift that has been on its voyage from endless time.



Painted by Abanindranath Tagore

Maybe there is one house in this city —

LXVI

LISTEN, my heart, in his flute is the music of the smell of wild flowers, of the glistening leaves and gleaming water, of shadows resonant with bees' wings.

The flute steals his smile from my friend's lips and spreads it over my life.

LXVII

You always stand alone beyond the
stream of my songs.

The waves of my tunes wash your
feet but I know not how to reach them.

This play of mine with you is a play
from afar.

It is the pain of separation that
melts into melody through my flute.

I wait for the time when your boat
crosses over to my shore and you take
my flute into your own hands.

LXVIII

SUDDENLY the window of my heart
flew open this morning, the window that
looks out on your heart.

I wondered to see that the name by
which you know me is written in April
leaves and flowers, and I sat silent.

The curtain was blown away for a
moment between my songs and yours.

I found that your morning light was
full of my own mute songs unsung ; I
thought that I would learn them at
your feet—and I sat silent.

LXIX

You were in the centre of my heart,
therefore when my heart wandered she
never found you ; you hid yourself from
my loves and hopes till the last, for
you were always in them.

You were the inmost joy in the play
of my youth, and when I was too busy
with the play the joy was passed by.

You sang to me in the ecstasies of
my life and I forgot to sing to you.

LXX

WHEN you hold your lamp in the sky it throws its light on my face and its shadow falls over you.

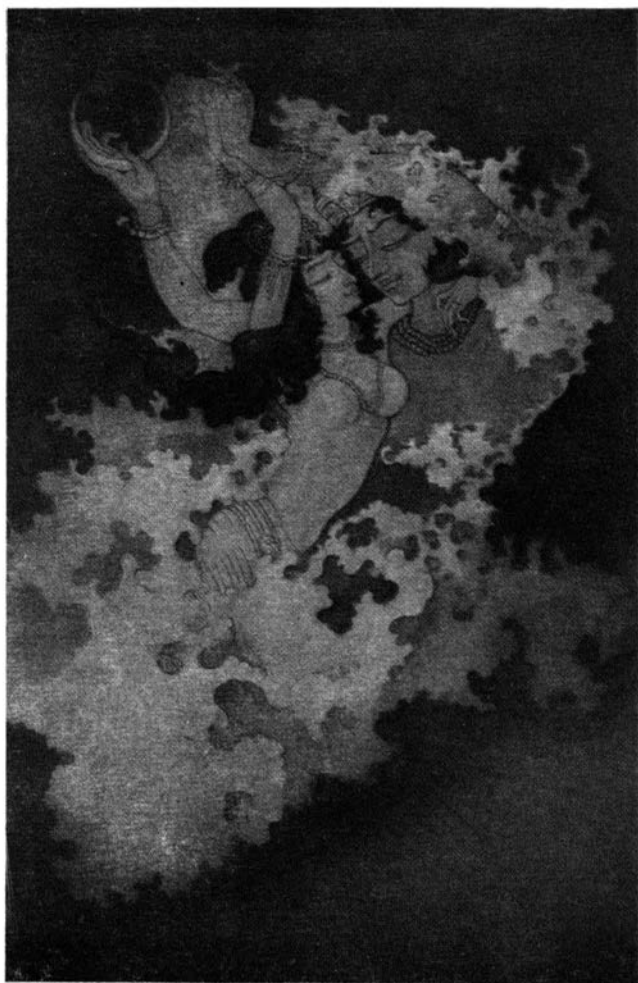
When I hold the lamp of love in my heart its light falls on you and I am left standing behind in the shadow.

LXXI

O THE waves, the sky-devouring waves,
glistening with light, dancing with life,
the waves of eddying joy, rushing for
ever.

The stars rock upon them, thoughts
of every tint are cast up out of the
deep and scattered on the beach of life.

Birth and death rise and fall with
their rhythm, and the sea-gull of my
heart spreads its wings crying in
delight.



Painted by Nandalal Bose

O, the Waves, the Sky-devouring Waves!

LXXII

THE joy ran from all the world to build
my body.

The lights of the skies kissed and
kissed her till she woke.

Flowers of hurrying summers sighed
in her breath and voices of winds and
water sang in her movements.

The passion of the tide of colours
in clouds and in forests flowed into her
life, and the music of all things caressed
her limbs into shape.

She is my bride,—she has lighted
her lamp in my house.

LXXIII

THE spring with its leaves and flowers
has come into my body.

The bees hum there the morning
long, and the winds idly play with the
shadows.

A sweet fountain springs up from
the heart of my heart.

My eyes are washed with delight
like the dew-bathed morning, and life
is quivering in all my limbs like the
sounding strings of the lute.

Are you wandering alone by the shore
of my life, where the tide is in flood,
O lover of my endless days?

Are my dreams flitting round you
like the moths with their many-coloured
wings?

FRUIT-GATHERING 101

And are those your songs that are
echoing in the dark caves of my being?

Who but you can hear the hum of
the crowded hours that sounds in my
veins to-day, the glad steps that dance
in my breast, the clamour of the restless
life beating its wings in my body?

LXXIV

My bonds are cut, my debts are
paid, my door has been opened, I go
everywhere.

They crouch in their corner and
weave their web of pale hours, they
count their coins sitting in the dust
and call me back.

But my sword is forged, my armour
is put on, my horse is eager to run.
I shall win my kingdom.



Painted by Surendranath Kar

The spring with its leaves and flowers has come into
my body

LXXV

It was only the other day that I
came to your earth, naked and name-
less, with a wailing cry.

To-day my voice is glad, while you,
my lord, stand aside to make room
that I may fill my life.

Even when I bring you my songs
for an offering I have the secret hope
that men will come and love me for
them.

You love to discover that I love this
world where you have brought me.

LXXVI

TIMIDLY I cowered in the shadow of safety, but now, when the surge of joy carries my heart upon its crest, my heart clings to the cruel rock of its trouble.

I sat alone in a corner of my house thinking it too narrow for any guest, but now when its door is flung open by an unbidden joy I find there is room for thee and for all the world.

I walked upon tiptoe, careful of my person, perfumed, and adorned—but now when a glad whirlwind has overthrown me in the dust I laugh and roll on the earth at thy feet like a child.

LXXVII

THE world is yours at once and for ever.

And because you have no want, my king, you have no pleasure in your wealth.

It is as though it were naught.

Therefore through slow time you give me what is yours, and ceaselessly win your kingdom in me.

Day after day you buy your sunrise from my heart, and you find your love carven into the image of my life.

LXXVIII

To the birds you gave songs, the
birds gave you songs in return.

You gave me only voice, yet asked
for more, and I sing.

You made your winds light and they
are fleet in their service. You burdened
my hands that I myself may lighten
them, and at last, gain unburdened
freedom for your service.

You created your Earth filling its
shadows with fragments of light.

There you paused; you left me
empty-handed in the dust to create
your heaven.

To all things else you give; from me
you ask.

The harvest of my life ripens in the
sun and the shower till I reap more
than you sowed, gladdening your heart,
O Master of the golden granary.

LXXIX

LET me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone ; but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.

LXXX

You did not know yourself when
you dwelt alone, and there was no
crying of an errand when the wind ran
from the hither to the farther shore.

I came and you woke, and the skies
blossomed with lights.

You made me open in many flowers ;
rocked me in the cradles of many forms ;
hid me in death and found me again in
life.

I came and your heart heaved ; pain
came to you and joy.

You touched me and tingled into
love.

But in my eyes there is a film of
shame and in my breast a flicker of

FRUIT-GATHERING 109

fear; my face is veiled and I weep
when I cannot see you.

Yet I know the endless thirst in
your heart for sight of me, the thirst
that cries at my door in the repeated
knockings of sunrise.

LXXXI

You, in your timeless watch, listen to
my approaching steps, while your glad-
ness gathers in the morning twilight
and breaks in the burst of light.

The nearer I draw to you the deeper
grows the fervour in the dance of the
sea.

Your world is a branching spray of
light filling your hands, but your heaven
is in my secret heart; it slowly opens
its buds in shy love.

LXXXII

I WILL utter your name, sitting alone
among the shadows of my silent
thoughts.

I will utter it without words, I will
utter it without purpose.

For I am like a child that calls its
mother an hundred times, glad that it
can say "Mother."

LXXXIII

I

I FEEL that all the stars shine in me.

The world breaks into my life like
a flood.

The flowers blossom in my body.

All the youthfulness of land and
water smokes like an incense in my
heart ; and the breath of all things plays
on my thoughts as on a flute.

II

When the world sleeps I come to
your door.

The stars are silent, and I am afraid
to sing.

I wait and watch, till your shadow

FRUIT-GATHERING 113

passes by the balcony of night and I
return with a full heart.

Then in the morning I sing by the
roadside ;

The flowers in the hedge give me
answer and the morning air listens,

The travellers suddenly stop and
look in my face, thinking I have called
them by their names.

III

Keep me at your door ever attending
to your wishes, and let me go about in
your Kingdom accepting your call.

Let me not sink and disappear in
the depth of languor.

Let not my life be worn out to
tatters by penury of waste.

Let not those doubts encompass me,
—the dust of distractions.

114 FRUIT-GATHERING

Let me not pursue many paths to
gather many things.

Let me not bend my heart to the
yoke of the many.

Let me hold my head high in the
courage and pride of being your servant.

LXXXIV

THE OARSMEN

Do you hear the tumult of death afar,
The call midst the fire-floods and
poisonous clouds

—The Captain's call to the steersman
to turn the ship to an unnamed
shore,

For that time is over—the stagnant
time in the port—

Where the same old merchandise is
bought and sold in an endless
round,

Where dead things drift in the ex-
haustion and emptiness of truth.

They wake up in sudden fear and ask,
“Comrades, what hour has struck?
When shall the dawn begin?”

116 FRUIT-GATHERING

The clouds have blotted away the
stars—

Who is there then can see the beckon-
ing finger of the day ?

They run out with oars in hand, the
beds are emptied, the mother
prays, the wife watches by the
door ;

There is a wail of parting that rises to
the sky,

And there is the Captain's voice in
the dark :

“Come, sailors, for the time in the
harbour is over !”

All the black evils in the world have
overflowed their banks,

Yet, oarsmen, take your places with the
blessing of sorrow in your souls !

Whom do you blame, brothers ? Bow
your heads down !

The sin has been yours and ours.

FRUIT-GATHERING 117

The heat growing in the heart of God
for ages—

The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong, the greed of fat prosperity, the rancour of the wronged, pride of race, and insult to man—

Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.

Like a ripe pod, let the tempest break
its heart into pieces, scattering
thunders.

Stop your bluster of dispraise and of
self-praise,

And with the calm of silent prayer on
your foreheads sail to that unnamed shore.

We have known sins and evils every
day and death we have known ;

They pass over our world like clouds
mocking us with their transient
lightning laughter.

118 FRUIT-GATHERING

Suddenly they have stopped, become a
prodigy,

And men must stand before them
saying :

“We do not fear you, O Monster ! for
we have lived every day by con-
quering you,

“And we die with the faith that Peace
is true, and Good is true, and true
is the eternal One !”

If the Deathless dwell not in the heart
of death,

If glad wisdom bloom not bursting the
sheath of sorrow,

If sin do not die of its own revealment,

If pride break not under its load of
decorations,

Then whence comes the hope that
drives these men from their homes
like stars rushing to their death in
the morning light ?

FRUIT-GATHERING 119

Shall the value of the martyrs' blood
and mothers' tears be utterly lost
in the dust of the earth, not buying
Heaven with their price ?

And when Man bursts his mortal
bounds, is not the Boundless re-
vealed that moment ?

LXXXV

THE SONG OF THE
DEFEATED

MY Master has bid me while I stand at the roadside, to sing the song of Defeat, for that is the bride whom He woos in secret.

She has put on the dark veil, hiding her face from the crowd, but the jewel glows on her breast in the dark.

She is forsaken of the day, and God's night is waiting for her with its lamps lighted and flowers wet with dew.

She is silent with her eyes down-cast ; she has left her home behind her, from her home has come that wailing in the wind.

FRUIT-GATHERING 121

But the stars are singing the love-song of the eternal to a face sweet with shame and suffering.

The door has been opened in the lonely chamber, the call has sounded, and the heart of the darkness throbs with awe because of the coming tryst.

LXXXVI

THANKSGIVING

THOSE who walk on the path of pride
crushing the lowly life under their
tread, covering the tender green of the
earth with their footprints in blood ;

Let them rejoice, and thank thee,
Lord, for the day is theirs.

But I am thankful that my lot lies
with the humble who suffer and bear
the burden of power, and hide their
faces and stifle their sobs in the dark.

For every throb of their pain has
pulsed in the secret depth of thy night,
and every insult has been gathered into
thy great silence.

FRUIT-GATHERING 123

And the morrow is theirs.

O Sun, rise upon the bleeding hearts
blossoming in flowers of the morning,
and the torchlight revelry of pride
shrunk to ashes.

THE END

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